

Media Monitoring Report: Afghanistan

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November 13th – December 17th

1. Balochi Genocide?
2. Security Agreement between US and Afghanistan
3. Peace Councils seeks immunity; concerns over released prisoners
4. Media
5. Afghanistan tops index of most corrupted countries
6. Executions
7. NGO and Human Rights Watch concerned

Balochi Genocide?

(Toloneews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 13, 2012, in English)

Balochi Genocide Continues Today: Elders

- Elders of the Baloch tribe in Afghanistan are concerned that their people are being systematically targeted in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran

- Thousands of Balochi men and women are being killed by Afghan, Iranian and Pakistani security forces according to a tribal elder
- Afghan lawmakers said that Balochis make up nearly two million people in Afghanistan but claimed that their equal rights were not provided

Implications: The lack of media attention on this issue is concerning. The rights of the Balochi peoples are being violated and there is fear that the aim is to exterminate the entire population.

Security Agreement between US and Afghanistan

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 15, 2012, in English)

Afghan, US Talks for Long-Term Security Deal Begin

- Security deal with U.S. could impact foreign relation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries
- Tehran opposed to establishment of permanent U.S. bases in Afghanistan, saying that it is a threat to peace and stability in the region

Implications: The specifics of a security agreement between Afghanistan and the U.S. will have an impact on peace and security within the country. Without security commitments made for after the withdrawal in 2014, insurgents may escalate their attacks greatly without fear of persecution. However, if the security agreement is seen as a threat to either the sovereignty of Afghanistan or its neighbours, states and insurgent groups will likely oppose it through violent protests.

Peace Councils seeks immunity; concerns over released prisoners

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 17, 2012, in English)

Peace Council Seeks Immunity, Lift on Sanctions for Taliban

- According to the head of the High Peace Council (HPC) the names of Taliban officials who join peace negotiations with the Afghan government will be removed from the United Nations sanctions list and will receive immunity from prosecution
- Afghanistan and Pakistan will hold a joint meeting of the Islamic Ulema in their respective countries or in Saudi Arabia to assess suicide attacks and other military action of the Taliban under Islamic law

Implications: There could be a backlash for giving immunity to Taliban officials who have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Also giving immunity to Taliban officials

may make them more brazen in their attacks against civilians, because they will not fear persecution. Removal from the UN sanctions list will make it easier for Taliban officials to travel.

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 19, 2012, in English)

Afghan Senators Concerned Over Release of Taliban Prisoners

- Taliban prisoners have been released from Pakistan in order to bring Taliban to peace negotiation table.
- Afghan senators are concerned because Taliban continues to officially dismiss any negotiations with the Afghan government
- The Taliban continue to carry out suicide attacks and plant hidden bombs in civilian areas

Implications: The Taliban's lack of cooperation in the peace process is a crucial factor that is delaying any progress in the matter. The release of prisoners is seen as a detriment to the peace process and justice for those who have been affected by the crimes committed by prisoners.

(Daily Outlook, private daily newspaper, article dated November 27, 2012, in English)

HRW Slams Afghan Plan for Taliban Immunity

- Human Rights Watch is against the exchange of immunity from prosecution for peace negotiations with the Taliban
- Nine Taliban officials were freed from a Pakistani prison at the request of the High Peace Council and 50 more members of the Taliban are expected to be released in the future
- HRW said providing immunity for genocide, war crimes and other human rights abuses violates international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions
- Afghan President Hamid Karzai allowed the National Stability and Reconciliation Law to go into effect in 2010, despite his promise that he would not sign it. The National Stability and Reconciliation law prevents the prosecution of anyone involved in large-scale human rights abuses committed before December 2001

Implications: The National Stability and Reconciliation law is seen as a violation for Afghan citizen's right to seek justice for genocide, war crimes and other human rights abuses. This may also make it easier for perpetrators to commit crimes of this nature, thereby exacerbating the problem.

Media

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 29, 2012, in English)

Govt Decree on News Footage Limits Media: Nai

- Nai media watchdog has accused the Afghan government of limiting the freedom of the media with its latest footage restrictions
- The Ministry of Information and Culture warned local news networks of penalties if they publishes or televised shocking footage in response to complaints from viewers

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 26, 2012, in English)

Security Fears Linked to Less Women in Media: Nai

- Nai, Afghanistan's media watchdog has cited that there has been a ten percent decrease of female presence in the media, possibly over fears of declining security as a result of foreign withdrawal in 2014
- Presence of women in media important to combat violence against women

Implications: The decreasing presence of women in the media will have a negative impact on the improvement of their status and rights in the country. It is also an indication of potential security problems in the near future and after the withdrawal of foreign troops in 2014 as women's civil rights groups and women in genral may become a target.

Afghanistan tops index of most corrupted countries

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated December 05, 2012, in English)

Afghanistan Tops Most Corrupt Countries Index

- Afghanistan tops the list of corrupt countries according to the Transparency International report
- The report cited weak governance, impunity, fraud in elections, government-dominated justice sector, unnecessary detentions, extortion, and illegal killing with impunity as contributing to increasing corruption
- Approximately \$8 billion is estimated to have been embezzled from Afghanistan in the last decade

Implications: Corruption, especially that involving illegal killing with impunity and unnecessary detention are violations of human rights laws. If citizens do not trust their government to bring about justice, insurgent groups will not cease their violent attacks because there is no a viable and deterrent justice system.

Human Rights Violations and the government

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated December 10, 2012, in English)

Government Blamed for Increase of Human Rights Violations

- Human rights workers blame the government for ongoing human rights abuses in the country. The head of the Afghanistan Civil Society Association, Azizullah Rafee accused most government officials of being human rights violators. Activists are concerned about increasing violence, especially against women and children
- List of human rights violations: insecurity, crimes against humanity, increasing violence against women, child soldiers, lack of access to education, torture and killing of innocent people, etc.

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated December 10, 2012, in English)

Rights Abuses Will Continue if Crimes Go Unpunished: AIHRC

- Most human rights perpetrators have gone unpunished
- United Nations Human Rights Director Georgette Gagnon the responsibility to protect human rights belongs to both the Afghan government and international community and said the role of women in peace negotiations needs to increase

Implications: The inability of the government to deal with human rights violations is seen to have contributed to an increase of violations in the past year. Placing human rights perpetrators in official government positions decreases the legitimacy of the government.

Executions

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 22, 2012, in English)

Lawmakers, Scholars React to Taliban Call for End to Executions

- Taliban demand an end to the execution of prisoners and threaten to retaliate. 14 prisoners were hanged during the week, some of whom were involved with Taliban-led suicide attacks in Afghanistan
- Many groups have responded citing that Islam allows death penalty for severe crimes and have said that the Taliban have violated human rights and executed people unjustly

Implications: Although the Taliban's call to end executions is seen as hypocritical, the issue is one of human rights. Furthermore, the death penalty is in line with Sharia law, making its abolition more problematic. It is seen as a legitimate and deterrent form of justice.

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated December 11, 2012, in English)

Over 200 Children Held in Bagram Prison: HRW

- According to Human Rights Watch, over 200 juvenile Afghans arrested by US forces are being detained at the Bagram detention center north of Kabul. Children are being held in the same cells as adults

Implications: This violation of the rights of a child decreases the legitimacy of foreign bodies as upholders of human rights.

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated December 11, 2012, in English)

Human Rights Groups Call for War Crimes Report

- Human rights groups demand the publication of the Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission report on war crimes committed over the past three decades
- Government pressure not to release the report because of the implications it will have on certain politicians has been cited as the reason for this delay

Implications: The transparency of the government, especially via the War Crimes Report, is essential for bringing about peace, justice and security to the nation. However, its release may also pose a threat to the security and stability of the country if high ranking officials are targeted in the report.

(Tolonews, 24-hour private satellite news channel, part of Moby group, article dated November 18, 2012, in English)

Afghan Rights Group Concerned Over Civilian Deaths

- Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) called on insurgent groups to stop using roadside bombs as a result of the high number of civilian casualties. IEDs have been the largest single killer of civilians in the Afghan war
- On Friday, roadside bombing killed at least 11 civilians and 4 others were injured in western Farah province